



PECULIARITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATION APPRAISAL OF ASSISTANTS OF PHARMACISTS IN LITHUANIA

Edita Babonienė¹; Laimutė Jonaitienė²; Ona Ragažinskienė²; Regina Motienė³

1-Head of the Pharmacy Technique Department at the Faculty of Healthcare of Kauno kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences,
2-Docent at the Pharmacy Technique Department at the Faculty of Healthcare of Kauno kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences,
3-Lecturer at the Faculty of Management of Kauno kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania.

Abstract

Following the alterations and additions to the pharmaceutical law of Lithuanian Republic the pharmaceutical activity in Lithuanian pharmacies is carried out by pharmacy specialists – pharmacists and pharmacy assistants (pharmacy technicians). The ability of pharmacy specialists to adapt, to improve and to develop their competencies is one of the success preconditions for Lithuanian health care pharmacy sector. Work aim: to investigate the changes among the specialists employed in pharmacies and pharmacy sector as well as to highlight the necessity to develop the qualification of pharmacy assistants (pharmacy technicians) according to the modern pharmaceutical legal basis in Lithuania. In 2008–2011 the research in Lithuanian pharmacy sector was performed which identified the changes in the numbers of pharmacies and their staff: the number of pharmacies decreased, while the number of pharmacists increased and the number of the assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) decreased. The decrease in the number of the assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) and the danger of their extinction in the future has been identified. The qualification appraisal for pharmacy assistants (pharmacy technicians) is implemented through the leveling studies at the Pharmacy technique department at the Health care faculty of Kauno Kolegija University of applied sciences and pharmacy study programme at the faculty of Pharmacy of Medical Academy at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. 75 % of respondents use their own money to pay for the qualification appraisal, and 25 % of respondents get financial support for the qualification appraisal activities from the pharmacy managers.

Key words: pharmacy assistants (pharmacy technicians), qualification appraisal, pharmaceutical sector, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

In Lithuanian pharmacies pharmaceutical activity is carried out by the pharmacy specialists – pharmacists and assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians). The ability of pharmacy specialists to adapt, to develop and to upgrade their qualification is fundamental for the success of the Lithuanian health care pharmaceutical sector. The upgrading of knowledge as well as the qualification appraisal of Lithuanian pharmacy specialists following the contemporary documents regulating professional qualification appraisal in the sectors of health care as well as pharmacy becomes an essential factor for the development of the pharmaceutical service in a pharmacy [1-7]. Different foreign countries face

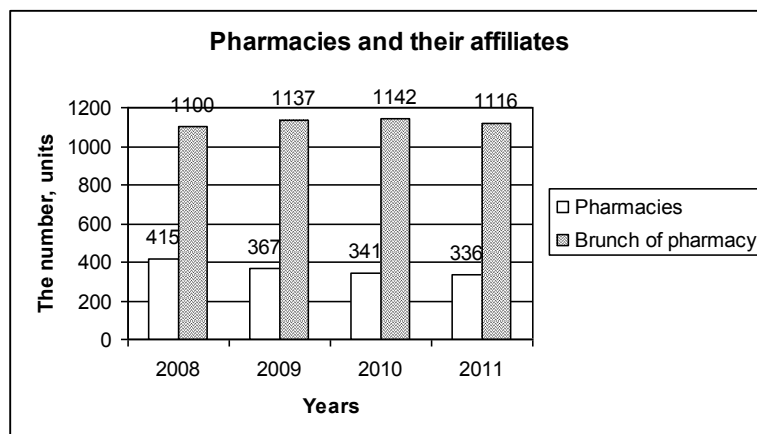
different problems related to the acquisition of pharmaceutical qualifications as well as upgrading the specialist qualifications [8-11]. The peculiarities of the acquisition of the professional qualification of assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) in Lithuania have not been sufficiently analyzed so far [12-16]. The aim of the research – to investigate the changes among the specialists employed in pharmacies and pharmacy sector as well as to highlight the necessity to develop the qualification of pharmacy assistants according to the modern pharmaceutical legal basis in Lithuania. The research object – the qualification development process of assistants of pharmacist (pharmacy technicians) during the process of changes within the legal basis of Lithuania.

2. Research material and methods

The research was performed in 2008–2011 in the pharmacies of different Lithuanian geographical regions using the questionnaire survey method. Questionnaires were completed by assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) who are the students in the Pharmacy study program at the faculty of Pharmacy of Medical Academy at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LUHS) as well as the students of the leveling studies at the Pharmacy Technique study programme at the Health Care Faculty of Kauno Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences. The data of 120 questionnaires was analyzed, statistical validity of which were ($p < 0,05$). Data was calculated according to analytical method, using statistical package of SPSS. This data was systemized and presented in graphical form using Microsoft Excel program [17].

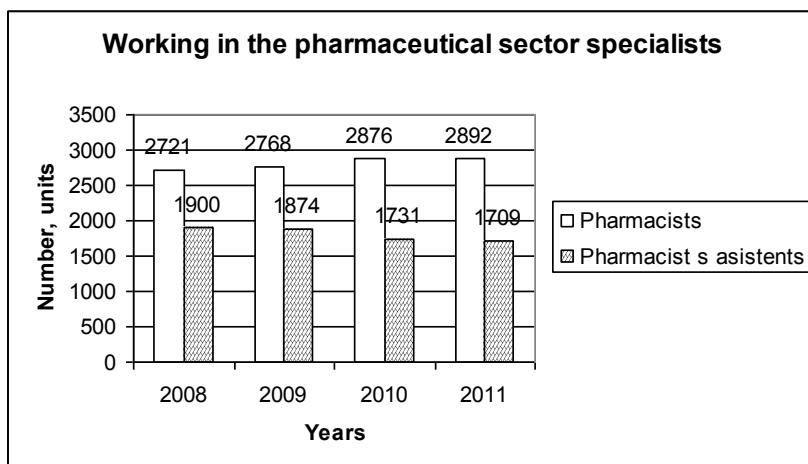
3. Results

Changes among the specialists employed in the pharmacies and pharmaceutical sector. The research of the changes among the specialists employed in the pharmacies and pharmaceutical sector indicated the decrease in the number of pharmacies and assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians), and the increase in the number of pharmacists ($p < 0,03$) (pictures 1, 2, 3).



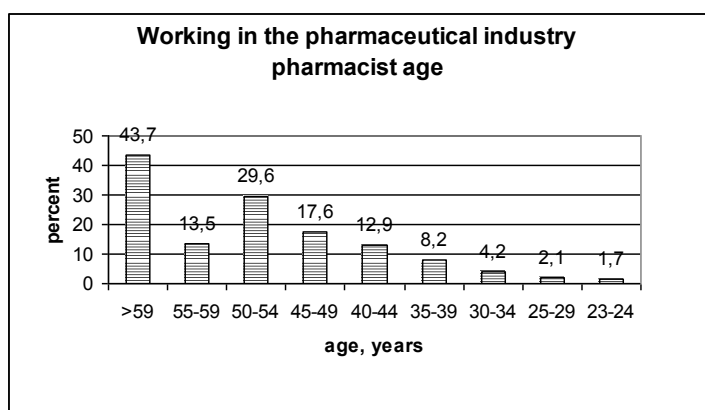
Picture 1. Number of pharmacies and their branches in Lithuania (units) in 2008 – 2011

Following the data of the State drug control agency at the Ministry of the health care of Lithuanian Republic on March 31, 2011 there were 1508 pharmacies, 90 wholesale enterprises, 22 producers and 2 pharmaceutical waste management enterprises in Lithuania [18].



Picture 2. Pharmacy specialists employed in Lithuanian pharmaceutical sector in 2008 – 2011

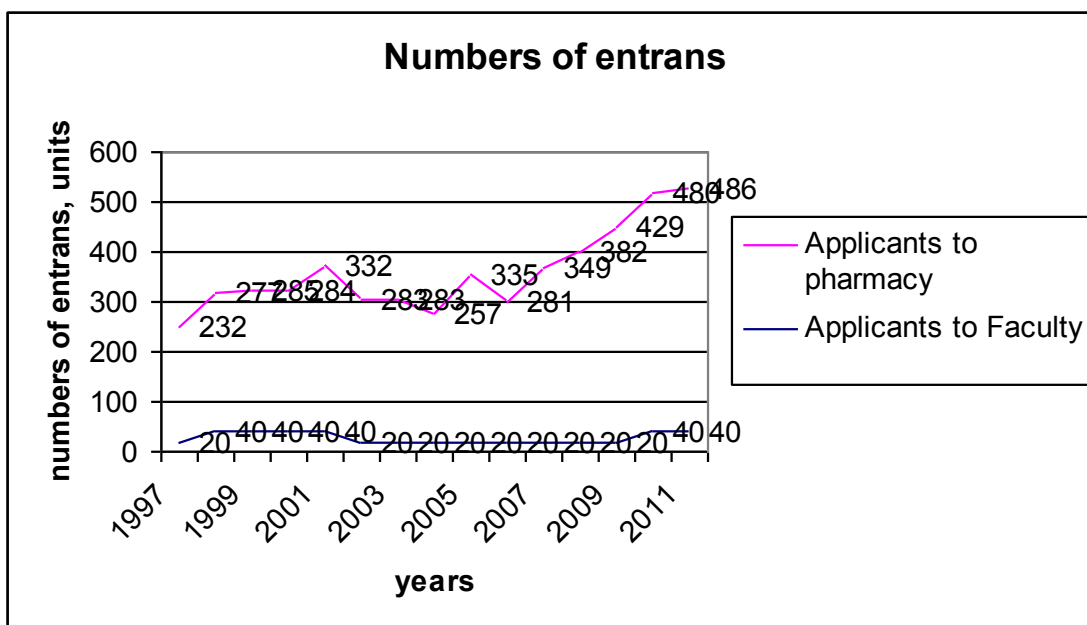
On March 31, 2011 there were 2892 pharmacists with the license for pharmaceutical activity practice, and 1709 assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) (picture 2). The age of the assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) ranged from 23 – 80 years: 80 % were older than 50 years of age, and 50 % of this group was people of the retirement age (picture 3). The tendency of the decrease in the number of assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) was identified in the pharmaceutical sector.



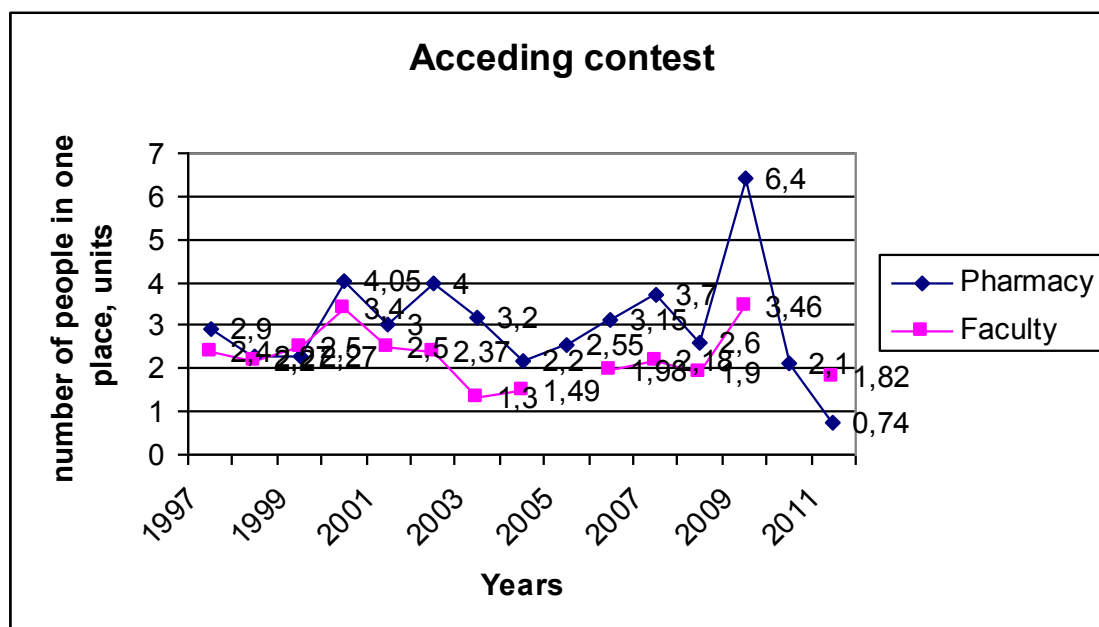
Picture 3. The age of assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) employed in Lithuanian pharmacy sector in the years 2008–2011

Peculiarities of the professional education and qualification appraisal of assistants of pharmacists in Lithuania. The pharmacy law, passed in the year 2006, states that pharmaceutical care should be provided only by pharmacists. At the moment the jobs of a pharmacist and assistant of pharmacist are

undergoing major changes concerning their functions in the assistant of pharmacist. This influences the changes in the content of professional education of an assistant of pharmacist. The most essential thing is to educate the assistant of pharmacist, whose main activity is to assist in developing qualitative pharmaceutical service as well as promoting healthy living practices in the pharmacy.



Picture 4. The number of entrants to the study programme of Pharmacy technique and to other study programmes at Kauno kolegija / university of applied sciences faculty of Health Care in 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011



Picture 5. Number of entrants following the contest to the study programme of Pharmacy technique and other study programmes at Kauno kolegija / university of applied sciences faculty of Health Care in 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011



In Lithuania assistants of pharmacist are trained at the Health Care Faculty of Kauno Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences where the non-university study program “Pharmacy technique” is implemented (pictures 4 – 5).

Students who studied in the same program in the college studies have a possibility to continue and to upgrade their qualification by choosing individual program of studies that would help to level off the differences between the contents of a college and a professional bachelor study programs. They can acquire professional bachelor degree of assistants of pharmacist and to continue their education for the Master degree in pharmacy at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences(LUHS).

4. Discussion/Conclusions

The questionnaire survey carried out in the pharmaceutical sector as well as pharmacies in different geographical regions of Lithuania and the analysis of the professional training of the assistant of pharmacist (pharmacy technician) at Kauno Kolegija/ university of applied sciences made during the empirical research in 2008–2011 revealed the following:

1. Changes in the number of pharmacies and the specialists employed in the pharmacies: the number of pharmacies and assistants of pharmacists (pharmacy technicians) decreases and the number of pharmacists increases.
2. The qualification appraisal for pharmacy assistants is implemented through the leveling studies at the Pharmacy Technique Department at the Health Care Faculty of Kauno Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences and Pharmacy study program at the faculty of Pharmacy of Medical Academy at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences.
3. 75 % of respondents use their own money to pay for the qualification appraisal, and 25 % of respondents get financial support for the qualification appraisal activities from the pharmacy managers.

5. References

1. Explanatory note of changes in the articles 2,4,7,35,39 and 76 of the Lithuanian Republic Pharmacy Law project. [cited 2011 nowember 15]; Available from: <http://kaveikiavaldzia.lt/docs/2011/11/03/78435>.
2. Lithuanian Republic Pharmacy Law. Lithuanian Republic Parliament Law No. X-709, 2006 06 22. State News. 18 07 2006; No. 78-3056.
3. Concerning the confirmation of the descriptions the pharmacist and pharmacy assistant (pharmacy technician) rights and duties. March 26, 2007 No V-197. State News. 31 03 2007; No 37-1392.
4. Order of LR HCM „Concerning the professional qualification development of the health care and pharmacy specialists and order of funding” March 18, 2002 No. 132. State News. 27 03, 2002; No 31-1180.

5. „Concerning the order of LR Health Care Minister of March 18, 2002 „ Concerning the changes in the professional qualification development of the health care and pharmacy specialists and the order of funding “. February 01, 2010; No V-82. State News. 09 02 2010; No 17-818.
6. „Concerning the order of LR Health Care Minister of March 18, 2002 „ Concerning the changes in the professional qualification development of the health care and pharmacy specialists and the order of funding “.2000; No V-1235. State News.20 12 2008; No 146-5892.
7. Franklin R. Pharmacists, Taking a More Active Role in Patient Care An Expert Interview With Douglas Scheckelhoff. MS, RPh, FASHP, Medscape Medical News, June 24, [cited 2011 nowember 15]; Available from: www.medscape.com/viewarticle/745268
8. Henri R, Manasse Jr, Speedie K. M. Pharmacists, Pharmaceuticals, and Policy Issues Shaping the Work Force in Pharmacy. American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy. 2007; 64(12):e30-e48. © 2007 American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.
9. Need for Uniform National Standards for the Education and Training of Pharmacy Technicians. American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy. 2004; 61(11) © 2004; American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.
10. Noyce P. Governance and the Pharmaceutical Workforce in England. Medscape Pharmacists. 2006; 8(2) © 2006 Medscape.
11. Radžiūnas R, Baranauskas A, Barsteigienė Z. Lietuvos vaistinėse teikiamų farmacinių paslaugų kokybės atitikimo Europos Sąjungos šalių vaistinėms galiojančioms rekomendacijoms paslaugų kokybei analizė. Biomedicina. 2002 m. gruodis; T.2:171 – 5.
12. Grincevičius J, Radžiūnas R. Nuolatinio mokymosi ypatumai: farmacijos specialistų išvalgos profesinės kvalifikacijos kėlimo atžvilgiu. [cited 2011 nowember 15]; Available from: www.biblioteka.vpu.lt/pedagogika/PDF/2007/86/105-110.pdf
13. Grincevičius J, Visuomenės vaistinėse teikiamos farmacinės paslaugos tyrimas ir įvertinimas. Daktaro disertacija. Biomedicinos mokslai. Farmacija. (09B). Kaunas. 2008; 29-79.
14. Babonienė E, Jonaitienė L, Ragažinskienė O, Motienė R. Nuolatinis vaistininų padėjėjų mokymasis – vienas iš vaistinėje teikiamos farmacinės paslaugos vystymosi veiksmų Lietuvoje. Tarptautinės mokslinės – praktinės konferencijos “Šiuolaikinio specialisto kompetencijos: teorijos ir praktikos dermė” medžiaga [CD-ROM]. Kaunas: Kauno kolegija 2010.
15. Babonienė E, Ragažinskienė J, Mickienė Ž, Jonaitienė L. Farmacinės paslaugos kaitos galimybės pagal farmacinės rūpybos rekomendacijas. Sveikatos mokslai. 2010; T.20. Nr 3: 3186 – 90.
16. Čekanavičius V, Murauskas G. Statistika ir jos taikymai. 1.-Vilnius, TEV; 2002.-268 p.
17. Lithuanian republic Pharmacy Law. Lithuanian Republic Parliament Law No. X-709 22 06 2006; State News. 18 07 2006; No. 78-3056.
18. LR MES „ Pharmacy technician professional training standard“. September 26; 2001. Order No 1335. [Cited 2011 11 15]; Available from: www.infolex.lt/lite/ta/14247.
19. State drug control agency at the LR Ministry of Health Care. [cited 2011 11 26] ; Available from: www.vvkt.lt/index.php?182821045.

To cite this article (According to APA)

Babonienė, E., Jonaitienė, R., Ragažinskienė, O., & Motienė, R. (2012). Peculiarities of the Professional Education and Qualification Appraisal of Assistants of Pharmacists in Lithuania. In A. Cruz, A. Cunha, A. I. Oliveira, Â. Jesus, C. Pinho, M. Santos, P. Correia, R. F. Oliveira (Org), *Livro De Actas Do VIII Colóquio De Farmácia* (pp. 113-118). Presented at the VIII Colóquio de Farmácia, Vila Nova de Gaia: Área Técnico – Científica de Farmácia - Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde do Porto